

Department of  
Veterans Affairs

# Memorandum

Date: March 1, 2016

From: Acting Chief Officer, Readjustment Counseling Service (10RCS)

Subj: Vet Center Service Delivery Minimum Expectations Assessment

To: Readjustment Counseling Service (RCS) District Director and Regional Managers

1. Effective immediately the following information will be distributed to all Vet Centers.
2. PURPOSE: To provide RCS District and Regional leadership and Vet Center Team Leaders with information regarding minimum service delivery expectations by staff providers.
3. SCOPE: This guidance is applicable to RCS staff members with responsibility for service delivery, supervision and/or quality oversight.
4. BACKGROUND PERSPECTIVES: This guidance emphasizes the responsibility of all RCS leadership to assess the provision and quality of readjustment counseling services on a consistent basis. These oversight activities are entirely grounded in support of the Vet Center readjustment counseling mission for serving eligible Veterans, Service members, and their families.

a. The conceptual focus of readjustment counseling is the nexus between Veterans and Service members' combat experience and their current life adjustment. Readjustment counseling addresses the psychological residue of unresolved traumatic combat experiences that impact post war adjustment including issues related to family, employment and career adjustment. The readjustment counseling service mission consists of three inter-related service functions: **outreach, direct readjustment counseling, and referral and care coordination**. Direct readjustment counseling is provided in three modalities: **individual, group, and family**.

b. Vet Center oversight evaluation requires a combination quantitative measures and qualitative evaluations regarding the direct service mission. Quantitative measures include direct service visits provided to Veterans, Service members, and their families, SSN verified outreach contacts, and the accurate accounting for time within RCSNet. Quality of care evaluations include annual site visits, assessment of the Vet Center Team Leader's supervision; the efficacy of the Vet Center's non-institutional, personally engaging atmosphere promoting collegial relationships between staff and the local Veteran community; and the strength of Vet Center community relations and partnerships, VA and non-VA.

5. VET CENTER DIRECT SERVICE EXPECTATIONS: Specific expectations for Vet Center staff are as follows:

- a. Team Leaders: Fifteen (15) hours per week (37.5% RCSNet) in direct provision of readjustment counseling with an expectation of 1.5 visits per hour (average 40 hour week = 15 hours direct service, 22.5 visits).
- b. Counselors: Twenty (20) hours per week (50% RCSNet) in direct provision of readjustment counseling with an expectation of 1.5 visits per hour (average 40 hour week = 20 hours direct service, 30 visits).

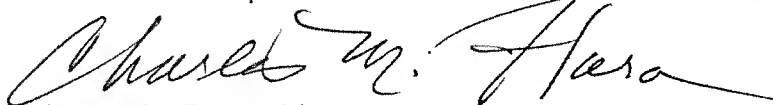
Note: Each hour of face-to-face service results in 1.5 documented readjustment counseling visits when accounting for group readjustment counseling work (multiple clients during one time period).

c. Outreach Workers: 60% of actual hours available (PAID) are spent in primarily Outreach activities and secondarily in Direct Services (RCSNet).

#### 6. THE MANAGEMENT OF UNUSED SERVICE AVAILABILITY:

- a. For the purpose of assessment, Vet Center unused availability is defined as the sum of available visits (derived from available counseling hours) below the minimum workload expectations and outcomes for each counseling staff member on the team, i.e., counseling staff were available, but no visits were documented.
- b. Available counseling hours for each staff providing service are derived directly from the VA PAID system. Available hours are the total hours minus all non-duty hours annual leave, sick leave, etc. Only available hours are utilized.
- c. All staff below 85% of their individualized expectation are required to develop an improvement plan approved by their supervisor. In each case, the staff member will receive documented, supportive and ongoing performance improvement supervision.
- d. It is the responsibility of RCS leadership at all levels to develop strategic plans, share best practices, and encourage team innovation sufficient to bring every RCS staff service provider up to the minimum expectation:
  - Ensure appropriate staff composition,
  - Ensure effective level of outreach,
  - Ensure appropriate case assignment regarding clinical complexity,
  - Ensure effective utilization of group readjustment counseling, and
  - As indicated, ensure appropriate utilization of ancillary staff (interns, temp/temp overhires, etc.
- e. Vet Centers with significant levels of unused service availability (over 2,000 unused visits available) require a strategic remediation plan taking into consideration the provisions of paragraph 6.d. above.

CONCLUDING COMMENT: In conclusion, all RCS leadership and service providing staff are responsible for meeting minimum expectations. These expectations were developed with full attention to all aspects of the Vet Center direct service mission.



Charles M. Flora, LCSW-C

### **Team Leader Minimum**

- 15 Direct service hours per Week
- 22.5 Visits per week
- 1170 Visits per year
- Action Plan Trigger (yellow light) <19 visits per week (below 85 percent of target)

### **Counselor Minimum**

- 20 Direct service hours per week
- 30 visit per week
- 1560 visit per year
- Action Plan Trigger (yellow light) < 25.5 visits per week (below 85 percent of target)

### **Outreach**

- 60 percent of hours available in outreach
- 24 hours outreach per week
- Action Plan triggers (yellow light) < 20 hours per week (below 85 percent of target)